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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

October 5, 1981

OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

In Reply  
Refer to: B-200856

Mr. Ivan Michael Schaeffer  
Assistant Commissioner  
Transportation and Travel Management  
Transportation and Public Utilities  
Service  
General Services Administration  
425 I Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20406

Dear Mr. Schaeffer:

Under current travel regulations as interpreted by GAO decisions, civilian employees of the Government on temporary duty assignments, who voluntarily travel on nonworkdays to a place other than their official duty stations, are reimbursed differently depending upon whether the employee is authorized a flat per diem rate or is reimbursed under the lodgings-plus system or paid actual subsistence expenses.

Paragraphs 1-7.5c and 1-8.4f of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) (FPMR 101-7, May 1973) provide that an employee on temporary duty may voluntarily return on nonworkdays to his official duty station or place of abode and be reimbursed for transportation and per diem or actual subsistence en route, not to exceed the amount which would have been allowed had the employee remained at his TDY station. Howard E. Johnson, 59 Comp. Gen. 293 (1980); Thomas Anderson, B-200601, July 31, 1981. Where an employee on temporary duty travels on his nonworkdays to a location other than his headquarters or residence those provisions for reimbursement of round-trip transportation and per diem or actual subsistence en route are not applicable. Lewis T. Moore, B-198827, August 3, 1981.

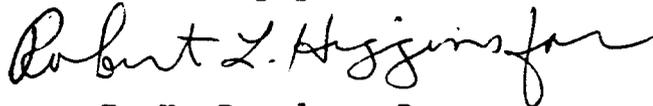
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As a result, our decisions have held that when such employees voluntarily perform nonworkday travel to locations other than their permanent duty stations they are not entitled to reimbursement of transportation costs for such travel. Lewis T. Moore, above. In such circumstances the employee who is authorized a flat per diem rate may be able to recover all or part of his travel expenses since the per diem allowance is payable without a showing of costs incurred, regardless of where the employee chooses to spend his nonworkdays. The employee reimbursed under the lodgings-plus system or actual subsistence expenses system does not enjoy that same benefit. Under the lodgings-plus system, the employee can recover only the meals and miscellaneous expenses portion of his per diem without a showing of lodging costs actually incurred. See B-186159-O.M., December 8, 1976. The employee on actual expenses recovers nothing absent of a showing of lodging and meal expenses actually incurred. The inequity becomes most pronounced when one compares the situation of 3 employees reimbursed under the three different systems who stay with friends on nonworkdays and incur no subsistence expenses at a location away from their temporary duty site.

We recommend that the General Services Administration provide by regulation that employees who voluntarily travel to a place other than their official stations on nonworkdays be allowed payment on the same basis as now authorized for employees who voluntarily return to their official stations. This change would do little more than restore a benefit that most employees received prior to 1973 when most travel was performed on a flat rate per diem basis

Sincerely yours,



F. H. Barclay, Jr.  
Associate General Counsel

Enclosures